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Subject: Sovereignty and Permanence of Love.

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A Weekly Publication

OF

## SERMONS

PREACHED BY

## HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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# SOVEREIGNTY AND PERMANENCE OF LOVE.

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"And now abideth faith, hope, charity [or love], these three; but the greatest of these is love [translated *charity*]." I COR. XIII. 13.

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Of all the symphonies that Beethoven ever wrote, the Fifth seems to me to be the center and climax. The others stream out from it, as it were, like rays of light from a central sun. It is the one bright, magnificent exhibition of consummate musical genius. Now, what the Fifth Symphony is to Beethoven's music, I think that the thirteenth chapter of 1st Corinthians is to the Bible; and especially to the New Testament. It is the more extraordinary because of the literary context in which it stands. It is as if, in a mighty battle, there should suddenly be a cessation of arms, and there should be lifted up, and roll over the battle-field, a wondrous hymn, united in by all the bands; and as if no sooner were the notes of this magnificent music completed than the battle should begin again, and the bands, separating, should go their several ways, to cheer their several squadrons.

Paul has been arguing, up to this time, on the subject of the diverse gifts—and they *were* strange and diverse gifts. He has been settling difficult questions and points of disagreement. He has been fending off, pushing aside, opposition. It is controversial all the way through. And there suddenly rises up here that which is better than these special gifts of prophecy and knowledge and faith and healing—the essential feeling of love. He stops the argument and illustration, and lifts up this magnificent descent, running through the thirteen verses of the thirteenth chapter. And the moment it is over, he goes back to his duty again, and commences the same controversial strain once more.

In the passage which we have selected for our text, there is the unequivocal declaration that love is the supremest of all elements; and that in connection with others that are mentioned (not alone,

perhaps) it is a sufficient guide. Faith and hope and love are the three religious elements which are not relative nor transient. They do not belong simply to an imperfect state of being. They are absolute and permanent. Whatever else changes, these will not change.

"Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

The supremacy and absoluteness or permanence of love, then, is the theme that I am going to speak about this morning.

1. Consider what is meant by *charity*, as it is unfortunately translated (time has made it unfortunate.) What is meant by that love? It is so generic that it is not easily defined. You must describe it, rather than attempt to define it. That which is nearest to a definition is the command,

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself."

In other words, it is not a faculty. It is the union of the faculties of the human soul in a given direction. It is that state of the whole soul in which it moves toward all beings, whether they be superior or whether they be equals, with good will, with affection, with sympathy. It is having toward others the same desire for goodness and happiness and well-being which we have toward ourselves. It is being and acting as if every other creature on earth, when brought to our knowledge, were but another self, so that we were instant, instinct and affluent in sympathy, and in that same sort of quick kindness which we feel for our own selves. It is not mere friendship, although friendship falls out in it, as a species under a genus. It is not merely sympathy with character. We do sympathize with goodness in character; but that is only a minor development of it. It is not simply personal reciprocation, as where one loves, being loved; or where one is kind, having received kindness. This is included in it; but it is only a single inflection of the greater disposition. These higher qualities are merely species under the larger form of development.

Love, which is represented in the New Testament, and of which Christ was the particular exemplar, is sympathy for universal sentient existence—for all that live. And it is a sympathy which carries their welfare with it. In its larger development, it carries in it the welfare of all creatures, both for time and for eternity. It may develop itself in severity; in restraint; in the infliction of pain; in seclusions and exclusions. It may develop itself in smiles, in gifts, in helps, in warmths, in approval; or contrariwise, it may neglect and chastise. Whatever may be the special instruments or methods by

which it acts, the sovereign center and the determining criterion of the feeling, is, that it carries with it royal, cordial, sympathetic desires for the well-being of every creature. It is love, whether it strike, or pierce, or slay, or give bitter medicine, or give the cup of sorrow, or give the cup of joy. It is love whether it wring tears or inspire smiles. Whatever it is, the central element of it is, the sympathetic and unquestionable wish of the heart for the well-being of the persons toward whom it acts—or the creatures, if it acts generically.

The center of this love, then, is sympathy for the real good and happiness of others. That is as near as I can describe it to-day. I shall try again. I have tried fifty times to describe it, and every time I have felt as though I had just glanced at it, and not hit it; and I do not feel as though I had done much better than that this morning. As near as I can strike it to-day, this is that large spirit of charity, or love, which is nowhere else so well described as in the thirteenth of Corinthians. There it is declared to be a permanent element which is to survive all wreck of time, and to endure throughout eternity.

2. It is this benevolent sympathy that the apostle declares to be the touch-stone and the test of all virtues. You are to recollect that he was writing this letter to the Corinthian Church; and that the Corinthian Church was a Greek church; and that the Greek modes of thought and philosophy were current there. And although there was a synagogue of Jews there, as everywhere else, yet the mind of the apostle, as is shown all through the first and second Epistles, was dwelling on the Greek method or habit of thought. What does he say? He says that this large sympathy, this desire for the welfare of all creatures that can feel or think or act, is transcendent not only, but is the test; that it is the quality which must inhere in every other virtue; that it is that without which every other virtue is hollow and nugatory.

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal."

That is, Though I have every form of literary genius; though I chant with the hymnist; though I declaim with the orator; though I write with the historian, speaking by the pen; though I am as a poet inspired; yet all inspiration which develops itself in the form of literature, if it be not pervaded by, and if at the root it be not determined by, this quality of sympathetic well-wishing or benevolence, is in the ear of God like the sound of brass or of a tinkling cymbal.

Genius that is benevolent, is divine; and all genius, of singing poets, and of attractive speakers and writers; all the attainments

of men in literature ; all men's thoughts and fancies, unless they are thoughts and fancies rooting themselves in this divine genius of sympathetic benevolence, are as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

He goes further :

*"Though I have the gift of propheey."*

*Prophecy* means the gift of inspiration. It carries with it, also, sometimes, the moral intuitions ; but these are special. And it carries with it foresight—the seeing of things that have not yet come to pass. But in general, in the Bible, throughout, the meaning of *prophecy* is inspiration for teaching.

*"Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries [hidden things], and all knowledge."*

There is a description of the intellect—of intellectual power. The apostle, if he had spoken in the phrase of our day, would have said, "All intellectual gifts and all intellectual power, if they are not imbued with and directed by the spirit of sympathy and benevolence and well-wishing, are nothing." That is, they have no moral value.

More than that, he declares that the enthusiasm of conviction, of faith, such as inspires a man, is of no validity except it be benevolent.

*"Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing."*

We see in our day again, as the apostle saw in his day, that there are certain moods of mind. Men may call it fantasy, or what they please. It is occult, obscure, not yet even investigated, quite unknown. And yet, men do rise into an upper sphere in which they seem to have a strange power over even natural law, or material law ; and to have strange power in other directions. And the apostle, looking upon all these developments and gifts, called them by the generic term of *faith*.

*"Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing."*

He says that even these transcendent developments, if they are not pervaded and vitalized by a true spirit of benevolent love, are nothing.

Nay, a man may distribute his wealth with a free hand, and leave himself poor, and yet come short of fulfilling the requirements of the Gospel.

*"Though I give all my goods to feed the poor, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing."*

A man may give his goods to feed the poor from a mere superstition of conscience. There are men who feel that it is their duty to do it, and who do it for that reason. It is conscience, and not love, that actuates them.

The Greeks and Romans were familiar with another form of dis-

tributive charity. That was where men were ambitious, and sought public favors. Making large sums of money, they distributed them by giving shows and processions for the sake of furthering their ambitious ends. But neither a conscientious nor an ambitious distribution of wealth is enough. The mere fact of distributing one's means among men will not do. There must be a heart behind the act.

"Though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing."

Though a man's zeal for his party, or for his philosophy, or for his church, or for any cause, whatever it may be, in which he is engaged, is such that he is willing to stand up to the last and die, he may fall below the fulfillment of this divine principle of action. A man may die for his pride, or for his conscience, or for a variety of reasons besides true love. He that dies loving, dies divinely, and nobody else does. Love is the leaven, and every quality is dough that has not that in it, no matter what it is.

All cold annunciation of truth is therefore a false annunciation of truth. All cold defense of the truth in sympathy with a system, in sympathy with moral government, in sympathy with intellectual excellence, is spurious. The apostle elsewhere gives us the maxim,

"Speaking the truth in love."

Speaking the truth is not enough. A man may speak the truth and not do it in the Gospel spirit. I have known men who spoke the truth as in summer, once in a while, clouds spit rain in the shape of hailstones. When it rains, every plant on earth lifts up its blossoms and leaves, and thanks God; but when it rains hail, nothing thanks God. Everything is pelted down. Oftentimes when men proclaim the truth it is a hailstone teaching.

All cold and heartless justice; all bare sense of proportion; all mere right; all abstract rectitude, as measured by any ordinary standard—this is not enough. Justice is not justice unless it has a heart of love in it. Purity and integrity which care only for themselves are not pure. They are not integers. All moral qualities, all devotion, all worship, all prayer, all perfunctory service, are lost, unless they have this mainspring, true love. Nothing may live without it. Truth is not true, justice is not just, obedience is not right, worship is hollow, and all aspiration vagrant, without love. With love, there is truth, and there is justice, and there is pain, and there are strokes. Love wrings tears; love shuts up men; love chastises men; love grasps men even unto death. In some sense love may be said to be remorseless. So it is with the mother's love. Seeing that the child's life cannot be saved unless some instant surgical operation be performed, if the physician is absent, she performs it, in spite of the cries and struggles of the child, rather than that it shall

die. Love may be severe. Love is just, and love is true, and love is pure, and love is oftentimes apparently harsh. Love has universal command of all instruments. It is back of all instruments. It affects all seemings. The true feeling is a yearning, sympathetic desire for the good of those who are touched or affected.

So, then, whether it gives or takes away, whether it caresses or repels, whether it strikes or binds up, the essential spirit of love is a real sympathetic and earnest desire for the profit of those who are affected by it. And without this there can be no teaching that is good, no philosophy that is good, no moral government that is good, and no administration of law that is good. It is the universal and indispensable quality of all right moral action. It must lie at the foundation of our ideas of the character of God. No character of God is rightly put together or rightly conceived of in which the overruling sovereignty does not inhere in love. He is a "consuming fire." He has zeal and fury which, as it were, "burn to the lowest hell," at times; but, after all, these are but the hands of love stretched out, by which love is working. And any character of God which is fashioned to produce any other impression than that; any character which presents him to your thought as more wise than love, more true than love, more pure than love; any conception of God which is stronger in your mind than that of a real sympathetic, loving God, is false. If you worship God as a being other than a God of love, you are worshiping a demon. For God is love. Many and many a man will have to throw away his God before he can enter heaven.

Any conception of moral government which makes it other than an organized and wise organization of true sympathetic benevolence and love, is a false conception of moral government. We hear much about the welfare of the universe. That is an abstraction. God's moral government is for the welfare of the *individuals* of the universe—of *every living thing* in the universe.

All conceptions of Christian character are just so far imperfect as they are made to stand in anything besides this true benevolence. All administrations of affairs, all administrations of moral government, all administrations of political interests, all administrations of international law, must have this element of love in them as a regnant quality. It is the determining element, the touch-stone, by which all these are to be tested. International law has no right to be selfish. The statutes of a country have no right to be selfish. You have no right to have a political economy which takes care of this nation at the expense of any other nation. You have no right to build up the United States of America to the neglect of England or France or Prussia. You must have a political economy that ad-

ministers for the best good of the whole, and not for any special part. The administration of civil law must have this central idea of love as its motive-power, and not any abstract notion of government. There may be the infliction of pain in the administration of law; but all pain must be recuperative. It must restore. All severities must work in that direction.

The developments of the human soul are ripe or crude, as they are inspired, guided and limited, by this one sovereign quality. And I declare, if there be truth or understanding in the revelation of God, that which governs in the soul of God, that which is the secret or universal inspiration of the whole vast scheme of moral force throughout the universe, that which is the peculiar and distinct quality of Christianity, that which is to enter into all the inflections and administrations of Christianity, that which is to break out into public procedure, and all forms of administration, is the quality of truth, of justice, of integrity, of rectitude, of righteousness, in love.

Oh, that this predominant quality had root, and that there were a benevolent consideration and sympathy for those who are affected by law or administration. Oh! that there were a true benevolent heart toward all men.

I have been censured for saying that I pitied criminals. I have been censured for saying that when others were attempting to hunt out and run down men who were flagrant scoundrels, I had toward these very men, both before and after they were convicted, a true brotherly feeling. It has been said that to do that was to overthrow justice, and corrupt, in its very fountain, the element of truth. *I* say that there can be no justice without such a feeling as that. I say that whether it be a judge, or a lawyer before the judge, or a committee of excellent citizens, no man can hunt or run down the greatest culprit or criminal that ever lived, leaving out of mind that he is a creature born for eternity, loved of God, died for by the Lord Jesus Christ, and sentient to suffering or to joy, without doing him injustice. No man can forget his humanity, and then administer toward a criminal in a spirit which does not violate law and religion and propriety.

I throw this shield of a true Christian love over every poor courtesan that walks along the street. While I abhor the vice and the crime, nevertheless, when a woman, when an immortal, Christ-bought, sins, I think of *her*, as well as of her conduct. I throw this shield over every gambling den; over every burrow where thieves lie in wait for their victims. I throw this shield even over every murderer, over every savage. While I abhor their crimes, and would

resist them by all appropriate means, the moment I forget to love them, I do not know how to be just toward them notwithstanding all my zeal for purity and for truth and for justice. *Though I give my body to be burned for the commonwealth, and have not love, I am nothing.*

No man is fit to sit on the bench who has not a man's heart in him. No man is fit to urge the reformation of morals who has not a sympathetic heart in him. The best way to stop wickedness, is to love a man so that you cannot bear to see him wicked, and so that you not only restrain him by violence, but are willing, if need be, to suffer for him.

Why, that a man who does not think about these things, should rebuke me for expressing an intense Christian sympathy for men whom I know to be wicked, and who must be restrained and punished, and should say that it is unchristian and unpatriotic—I should not have been surprised at it in Barbary, or in ancient Greece or Rome; but after eighteen hundred years of teaching that God made sacrifice for his enemies, without waiting for them to repent, going before them, and loving them in sin, and dying himself rather than that they should die; after eighteen hundred years of the existence of Christianity in the world, which consists of the administration of forbearance and love toward men—after so long a time, that men should rebuke me for advocating that while punishing men for crime, while administering justice toward them, we should do it in the spirit of true love—this does surprise me. Why, what heathenism there is in theology yet! What heathenism there is in Christianity yet! We need another Christ to die to teach men in these modern days what it is to have the true spirit of justice. The spirit of naturalism seems to blind men to the true Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The law is,

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself."

The declaration is that benevolence is to be the supreme motive-power, the all-inspiring element, in our dealings with our fellow men; and that there is nothing good in intellection, and nothing good in conscience, and nothing good in devotion or worship, and nothing good in any religious service, unless it has at the root the savor and sanctifying influence of divine sympathy for men. And it is taught that there is to be this sympathy for men *as men*, whether they are right or wrong. And that all this should have been so hidden that men do not understand the plainest and simplest presentation of it, surprises me.

I abhor sin; but I have tried for forty years to learn how, abhorring sin, to love the sinner. I abhor public transgression, that spreads mischief wide abroad on every side; but I have striven all my life long to bring myself into such a frame of mind that, while I abhorred wickedness, and sought its punishment so far as it was for the good of the wicked and for the public good, I should not for a moment forget that they were blood-bought, every one of them.

Men are fighting about dogmas and ceremonies and modes of worship; men are ready to burn their fellow men for differing from them in their theories of government and atonement; men will take their brethren by the throat, and say, "Pay me what thou owest, or I will choke you to death;" and yet, the sufferer, who is the grand Landmark of time toward which we are all steering, stands saying, "I gave my life for my enemies." While we were yet in our sins, Christ died for us.

"Oh!" say men, "when we see evidence of repentance in transgressors; when we see some token that they know their wrong, and are going to forsake it, we can show them sympathy;" and yet Christ died on the cross, by the spear, and with a crown of thorns upon his head, praying for his crucifiers, and saying, "Father, forgive them: they know not what they do." Murderers they were; and yet he plead for their forgiveness, while they were railing and scoffing at his feet. Men will preach sermons about this love, and then go into life and forget it, and treat men as if they were brutes.

3. But still more striking is the apostle's final statement, that this quality of sympathetic benevolence is absolute and permanent. This divine quality of universal good-will—of good-will to men in masses and to men individually—is the highest development; and it touches that realm which never changes.

I know what it is to be skeptical. I am in intimate sympathetic relations with all the advanced thoughts of the time in which we live. Little is printed that I do not read and ponder. And to say that it has given me no hours of darkness, and doubt, and distress, and many of them, would be to bear false witness.

There is one Orient to me, though, which never fails to bring relief. Although I do not understand the physical administration of things in this world, yet I see that there is an economy of nature which is just this: *Do, and live; or disobey, and die.* That is all that the face of nature has for me. I see the administration of material law in this world to be this: that the longest paw, and the longest tooth, and the most relentless jaw, devour the weak and the poor. I see that strength prevails. And if I only looked on the lower forms of the development of this world, I should despair.

I do not believe that the benevolence of God can be proved by natural theology. I do not believe that you can make out an argument in favor of it in nature. The spectacle of the development of the lower animals; the constitution of things by which one race of creatures lives on another—by which the spider eats the fly, and the bird eats the spider, and the hawk eats that other bird, and the hawk is shot by the boy; the exhibition of the universal destructiveness which pervades nature—these things afford no evidence of the love of God. It is as much as one can do to get along with them. And to believe in God as revealed in the Bible, while looking upon the outward manifestations in this world, requires faith.

It is just here that the comfort comes in to me. I find all the way through the Bible, that long before men suspected it anywhere else (yea, men hardly know it yet), there was a revelation from God by the inspiration of men of old, who evidently did not know the full substance of what they said, that God is higher than your thoughts, better than anything you can think of, ascribing to him the qualities of justice and love and mercy. And yet, the world is going on, and it will go thundering on, voices in the ages to come still saying, "God is love. Mercy shall yet triumph." As we go along down, I begin to hear other voices testifying that a new kingdom is coming. This is the old primal kingdom; but there is another one approaching. There is to be a second stage of evolution. And still later down, other voices come flocking on, and crying, "A new life!" And what, by and by, in the fullness of time, that life is to be, Jesus came to show. And from that time there has been an opening up of this new kingdom. While nature was all the time showing force, grace was showing good will. One was commanding and wreaking penalty; and the other was persuading, gently instructing, winning, wooing. Superinduced upon the old stock, I see the graft of the new tree of life, that bears, not thorns nor acerb fruits, but leaves of that tree of life which are for the healing of the nations—the new life in Christ Jesus born by the Spirit into human life.

This is the higher course of nature. The lower and rudimentary course was violence, strength, much suffering, and great cruelty; but in history, in the new era, instead of practising self-denials and making sacrifice and suffering rather than that others should suffer, there is opened up a real kingdom of God—the new kingdom—the new heaven and the new earth in which dwell righteousness.

In connection with this new kingdom is this declaration: That the supreme motive-power of the higher life, of the invisible kingdom of God, in the consecrated abodes of heaven, is sympathy.

thetic kindness, benevolent well-wishing, with all the being that we have.

The application of this is, to me, extremely comforting. In the first place, in common with hundreds and thousands of others, I have seen many of the dogmas of theology shaken from their places. I have been perplexed to know how to put in this, and that, and the other link of the accredited systems of thinking. I have seen many young men go by the board, because they could not manage their theology. They have sought literary work or business pursuits because they could not wear the old theological armor. And I have had my own trials, too. But this thought has always held me up: Whatever may be the theories of attribute or administration, one thing I know certainly, and that is, that love is the real marrow of the universe, and that if I work in the spirit of love, if I labor to produce the fruits of love among men, if I give the power of my life for building men up in righteousness, I cannot be far from the right path. I may not be able to teach the philosophy or the love of sympathy; but the whole economy I know is to inspire men with this intense desire to build up their fellow men in truth, and purity, and goodness. If you touch that, you have touched the main thing. Having touched that, you cannot be very heretical. Such are the articulations of truth, that he who works for the ends which God is working for, cannot be far from the channels in which God is working.

And if there be any of you whose theology does not fit you, and who cannot get along with it—well, get along without it. Work for men. You are far enough advanced, now, in the history of nations, to do a vast deal of work for men without being hampered by this ecclesiasticism or that dogmatism. Not that I would speak contemptuously of these things, except when they are despotic. I say that they are of use; but when they undertake to arrogate to themselves the right to dictate to my conscience, or faith, I tread them under foot. I will not be subject to them, not for an hour; but if they say that they are instruments, I do not object to them. If they know their proper place, and keep it, that is all right; but they shall not despote over me. They are my servants, and not my masters. I will not bow down to them, or serve them.

And I say to men who are not in agreement with the regnant systems of theology, You do not need to leave the ministry; you do not need to leave the pulpit; you do not need to leave the church of Christ. It is not essential that you should harmonize with all the points of the creed. If your heart is right with God, and your whole life breathes out toward men the spirit of unquestioned love;

if, examining yourselves inwardly, you know that the thing for which you live is to love men better, and to build them up in love in every form, then you are essentially Christian, and you are essentially in the possession of Christ's truth.

I notice, also, another class of men with whose condition I sympathize. They have thrown off all belief in the Bible. I am sorry for them. The older I grow, the more precious this Book becomes to me. I thank God for all he put into the Bible, and I thank God for all that has been put into it since.

When the carpenter built my father's house, and gave up the key, that house was not half builded. When my father and mother moved into it there was something else added which no carpenter could have put there. And when the first child was born, there was something else put there: not merely the child, but all the sweet thoughts and fancies, all the labors of love, all the tender care, all the ten thousand family enjoyments, that fell out in consequence of its presence there. And as brothers and sisters were added to the band (for God, as usual, blessed the ministerial household under my father's roof, and we were a troop); as child after child came, each peculiarity, each taste, each individual element, gave a new fresco to the walls. The floors were poorly clad with carpets, and the house was scantily provided with furniture; but rich was the dwelling with that which no upholsterer could make, and which no carpenter could frame. It was the family life of the old mansion. And to-day the chimney may smoke for aught I know (it did when I was a boy), the wind may whistle through the crevices on the north side, for aught I know (it did when I was a boy); but that house is more precious to me than any house built of marble and ornamented with gold could be. It was what my father and mother left me.

This Bible is God's house. Here, in this Book, is where saints have lived. Here is where holy men have lived. Here is where men in great distress have learned how valiantly to endure and to achieve. The world's best life has become associated with this Bible. Here is my own personal history; and here is yours, if you have been Christ-bred from your youth up. This Book is filled full of dear associations. Here are passages that I walked through when my first-born died. Here is where I found comfort when I was in great distress and torment. Here is where I first saw the Star of Bethlehem. Here is where I first gained some conception of the divine nature and government. This Bible is full of God's thoughts. Its contents are so interwoven with my own feelings and experiences that I might almost say that I have written the Bible over again for myself. As years pass by, the more I love the Bible. I am not so

stringent in regard to the theories of inspiration; but my heart clings to this Book. It is to me the Book above all books. And if I were to be sent away on a desolate island, and I were permitted to take but one book, sad would be my parting with one and another favorite author; but, after all, I should take the Bible in preference to any other book.

I am sorry to see men read Herbert, Spencer, and Huxley, and Tyndall, as though they were the end of the law. I read them, too; and I believe much that they say. A great many things in their works will be found to be a part of the truth. But in order to get the truth which they contain I do not propose to forego the Bible. And I say to every young man and every young woman who are taking what are called "the new views," It is not necessary that you should forsake your fathers' God, nor the mansion-house of the human soul. This is not Egypt. You are not going out of bondage into the promised land when for the sake of "new views" you abandon these old views. For this Book is what it declares itself to be:

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Here is a Book that undertakes to give you an idea of how to live. You cannot get a better notion of life in Huxley, nor anywhere else. There is nothing better than that which is given in the Bible. There the way in which men are to live is laid down so plain, in all forms, throughout the Old Testament and the New, that *the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein.*

And yet, I feel great sympathy for those of you who feel that you have floated off from the Bible. I am sorry for you. But it is not necessary that you should run into stark infidelity and unbelief. You say that historic Christianity does not seem to you to stand on any evidence. But it is not historic Christianity that is now under consideration. It is *real Christianity*. And that is declared to be, *loving God with all your heart, and soul, and strength, and mind, and your neighbor as yourself.* The great doctrine of love, which I have been preaching to you this morning, is declared to be the heart and substance of Christianity. Do not you believe that? Is not that true, all the world over? As much those who dispute religion as those who live in it, are moved nearer and nearer to this truth of ages, that the constructive force of love is to be the great power of the future. This is that toward which we are all going. And why should men forsake their fathers' God when he declares himself to be love? Why should they forsake Jesus, who come to interpret love in every human form? And why should they forsake

the word of God, which is a practical Book, and which occupies itself in showing men how to live in this supreme spirit of love.

Work for your fellow men. Educate the ignorant. Recall the wandering. Build up those who are broken down. Be patient with those who are out of the way. Go to your dissipated neighbor, not only to warn him and exhort him, but to carry his burden. Hold him up. Labor for him. Suffer for him. Do all that is in your power to save him. Die for your child, rather than that he should be cast away. Live for those who are not worthy to live. Give yourself and your heart's blood for those who need succor. Then you will come into such a sympathetic relation to the Lord Jesus Christ that you will say, with an enthusiasm of faith, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Once do the things which Christ did ; once live that high, supreme life of sympathetic benevolence, and nothing will take you away from this precious Biography of love.

There is but one other application that I will make, though I have several others marked.

If this be a true doctrine ; if this be the revelation of Christianity ; if this universal, potential, reconstructive force of love is God's charter ; if it is the principle on which God is administering ; if it is the fountain of Christian character ; if on this is to be tested all the developments of justice, and truth, and purity, and duty, then, of course, we know where the great stream of force is flowing. God's moral administration in this world must be in those lines.

It throws an interpreting light on the future. We know to what we are going.

And one other thing—it throws a great light and a great comfort upon those who are out of the way. There are hundreds of persons that are doing wrong, and that suffer a thousand times more than they enjoy. There are men that drink, who would give all the world if they could break away from the fascination of the intoxicating cup. There are men who lead illicit lives, and who suffer much, and who yearn to escape from the snare in which they are caught, and pray God to release them from their bondage. Prayers come out of strange places, often. To those who look superficially upon society, men are a bundle of inconsistencies, there is so much that is good and so much that is bad in them. And many of those who have gone wrong would come back to the right if public sentiment were not so cold and stern. Men take very little pains to keep their fellow men from falling ; and when they are once down, how censorious, how bitter, how suspicious they are toward them ! How much we throw in the way of men who are attempting to go back again to virtue ! If a man has stolen, there may be more good than

bad in him ; and yet how hard it is for him, having lost his position in society, to get a foot-hold again ! How few will sympathize with him and take him into their employ ! How few there are among Christ's men, who are willing to give themselves for their fellows who have gone wrong ! How hard it is for one who has stumbled in life to recover himself, under the circumstances !

Oh, troubled soul, higher than the church, higher than God's ministers, is God. And his love, his tenderness, and his pity are ineffable. He knows your sorrow, because he knows your sin. And sin in his sight is a thousand times blacker than it is in your sight when you look at it in your bitterest hours. The wickedness of your heart you have never begun to understand. But there is a Heart of love above all hearts, that would not have you die ; that would restore you ; that would lift you out of your sin. If you dare not go to man ; if you have no mother to go to ; if you have no trusted friend to whom you can go, then confess your sins to God. Begin again, and be assured that there is a God who administers his love in this world so that penitents shall have a chance. There is a chance for the recovery of a man who has gone wrong. If there is no strength in you, and you trust in God, and cry out to him, living as seeing Him who is invisible, you may be restored. And even if it be a struggle that goes with you to the hour of death, you will be rewarded in the eternal world for all the suffering that you have had here. The endeavors that you make here to live Christianly will be crowned with victory there.

I preach to you the love of God. I am not making an appeal to good-natured indifference. I preach the love of a God who is full of truth, and justice, and righteousness, and who seeks, with penalties, to make you come to truth and justice and righteousness. God so loves you that he chastises you ; and all his chastisements and penalties are laid upon you as his sons, that he may bring you out of your transgression, and prepare you for the kingdom of light, where tears stop because sin stops ; where we shall go out no more ; where we shall be as the sons of God.

What it all means I do not know.

"It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him."

And in that vision let us labor on, hope on, help one another on —help, and destroy not.

## PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

Since we have known thee, O Lord, thou Interpreter of the Father, we have learned to come boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and help in time of need. Our fears have often scourged us. Our consciences have risen up against us, and have built in our thought a judgment-seat where thou didst sit to condemn and destroy us. But over all the fantasies of our fear has risen a revelation of thy truth, that God is love; that he desires not the death of any one, but rather that each should turn and live. All that sweet history of thine, but little of which hath been recorded—we read it, how often, with blinded eye; but in the time of our deep distress, with what strange insight do we read it! The love of God; the mercy of God; the drawings of his heart; the longings and desires which transcend parental affection—how do these shine out! How do we behold walking in spotless integrity Him that rebuked the learning, the justice and the truth of men, and who, turning to the poor, and the outcast, and the unfriended, and the courtesan, and the thief, threw over them all the light and hope of sweet persuasion which drew them after him. How do we behold thee as against the background of nature, obscured and darkened, where the law of force brutally reigns, and where the strong oppress the weak, and where justice rolls and rolls, as, in darkness and storm the waves of the sea smite one against another! How, at such times, do we behold Jesus walking on the sea, and saying. Be not afraid; it is I.

Standing over against all these truths of outward life, is the new life of love; the new view of God, as a being of universal benevolence; and the new life of man. Sacrifice, nature has demanded; self-sacrifice, grace. We behold all things now moving according to a new principle of divine love. And all the world are beginning to find the light. And as in far distant lands, North, when winter has drearily held in bondage the long and dark days, at last the sun begins to come and shine dimly, and then shows itself a little above the horizon, and then stands full risen with healing in his beams; so we have been locked fast in our frigid fears, and have seemed to be in an eternal night, until the dawn of knowledge, at first but little, and then with growing and growing light, as of a star, and finally as of the sun which swallowed up the stars, has come to us. The Sun of righteousness has come to us with healing in his beams. And we behold God, transcendent in power and in majesty, full of truth, and full of justice, and full of purity, himself governing to bring to pass the counsels of his will which are for infinite goodness and infinite happiness. And though we cannot understand thee any more than insects can understand us; although we are as worms before thee, yet we feel, even while we do not understand. There is wafted to us a sense of divine graciousness and goodness. Thy kingdom, which shall come when the earth shall have rolled away, and all its burdens shall have sunk under the waves of time forever; that new kingdom, in which shall dwell righteousness, and in which the light and the joy shall be as the face of God, when thy heart shall stand for the sun, and for the moon, and for the stars; that kingdom to which thy children shall be translated, and in which they shall be blessed—we are drawing near to it. We know it by the warmth and the sweet odors which are wafted to us. As they who navigate the sea know that the land is near, by the odors which come to them upon the air, so we at times have a revelation of the kingdom of God—that great kingdom, unknown among men; that great kingdom, so slow in developing on earth; that great kingdom, where restored natures, built up in righteousness, shall dwell together in blessedness forever. The eye hath not seen it, the ear hath not heard it; nor should we understand it if we both heard and saw it. But we are carried toward it. Something in us is like it. Some strange thoughts

and feelings betoken it. It is coming. Into it have gone, Oh, how many! Blessed be thy name, the earth has not been altogether barren. Thou hast reaped harvests; and thou wilt yet reap more. Into that great and blessed estate have gone forth from our side not a few. We have sent our dear and precious children there. We have sent brothers and sisters. We have sent there the companions of our life whose going was as the desolating and the sacking of our hearts. But we have not lost them. They are but just before us, hidden by the brightness in which they dwell. And we are following after, mutely calling for our children and for our friends; and we are drawing near to them as we call. We are approaching that great unexplored and invisible realm. And it is more to us than all other things, that we be counted worthy to enter. We are glad that so many shall go in with crowns whom we have known only with dust and ashes on their head. We rejoice that so many shall go in walking strong as victors, who have been cast down and trodden under foot in this life. The last shall be first. The lowest shall be highest. The least shall be greatest. The most despised shall be the most honored. Joy shall go forth, and songs shall pour out, and a royal and a choral entrance shall be given to those who shall at last go home to the heavenly land. We would draw back none who are there, safe from danger and from temptation. We would not urge our own steps; thy will is better than our judgment; but when thou wilt have us go, we shall be ready. As long as thou thinkest it best for us to stay, we will wait patiently; but when thou dost give us permission to go home we shall go gladly. And grant, we pray thee, that we may learn something of the temper which befits the heavenly estate. May we learn something of those conditions of mind in which we should live here upon earth. May we have from day to day the heavenly disposition. May we be filled with tenderness, and with gentleness, and with sympathy, and with yearnings for the welfare of our fellow men. May we seek by the truth to build them up. May we, as God does, employ both pleasure and pain, both fear and hope, both reward and penalty, for their good. May we work evermore by that divine instrument, the Spirit of God, which is the Spirit of love.

Grant, we pray thee, that all those who are in thy presence this morning may have the evidence that they are children of God. May those who have never named thy name, nor thought of religion, feel how rich is their God; how abundant he is in mercy. May they understand that although he is just, and although he maketh requisition sternly, yet he is dealing with them for their good, often in the utmost severity. Grant that men may wake up to a knowledge of their treasure in God; to a conception of the joy that is theirs by inheritance. Grant, we beseech of thee, that on every side there may be more and more rousing up to a spiritual sense of the invisible realm which girds around the visible one.

We pray, O Lord our God, that thou wilt make thy people strong for righteousness. Bless the labors of their hands. Bless the means of succor which thou hast inspired them to give. Bless the thoughts and desires with which they minister. Wilt thou grant that they may spring from purified hearts. Wilt thou bring thy life near to them, that they may be able to live near their fellow men. May they live in the sight of heaven, that they may know the true colors of the things therein. Grant that more and more thy servants may be clothed with bolder zeal; with unspeakable joy; with that peace which belongs to thy people. And prepare their hearts, we beseech of thee, for thy work. Teach those who are to teach. Be with all our schools and Bible classes. Be with our missionaries. Be with all those who seek the reformation of morals. Grant that they may be filled with gentleness, as well as with boldness. May they have discreet wisdom. And we beseech of thee that thy blessing may rest upon us all.

Bless all thy dear churches, and all thy dear servants that minister in them ; and may thy Gospel be preached with more and more saving power. May the spirit of the Gospel be more and more felt in all the churches. We pray that they may be united in things that are good. May divisions cease among them. May they learn to see eye to eye, and to labor in God. We pray that those who work in thy cause may go forward inspired of God. And may the day speedily come when there shall be over all outward churches the one dear invisible church, formed of all good men who have their faces set toward the New Jerusalem.

We pray for all this land. Especially, to-day, we pray for those who are desolate—the great army of sufferers—those around about whom have been the flame and the darkness. We beseech of thee that thou wilt be a God of mercy to them. Comfort those who are in afflictions and bereavements ; those who are sick ; those who are appointed unto death ; and those who have seen the wreck of their worldly hopes. We beseech of thee that their courage may not fail them, and that they may come out of the fire purified as gold seven times refined.

And we beseech of thee that thou wilt continue to bless this nation by keeping the heart of sympathy open. May this great opportunity for good be an education to this whole people in true benevolence and sympathy.

We pray for the poor. We pray for the ignorant. We pray for all those who have gone forth from homes of comfort to make their abode among the uncultivated and the ignorant, to be contemned and outcast for their labors of love. Let there be to them a sweet sphere of peace in which they shall walk guarded of God, and as children of God. Bless, we beseech of thee, those who, though in humble relations, are still seeking to do a little good. Encourage them. May they remember that the mite of the widow was more than the treasure of the rich. And if they do what they can, may they be sure that God smiles, and will bless.

Build up the nations of the earth. We pray for them as for our own nation. We pray that all influences which are working against their prosperity may be destroyed ; and that all influences which shall tend to build them up may be multiplied. May wars cease, and the ambitions and passions which kindle war. May the gracious truth of God's love and benevolence more and more spread throughout the earth, and become the public sentiment of the globe. May ignorance and superstition flee away, and all mankind at last rise up into the estate and blessedness of the sons of God.

And to thy name, Father, Son and Spirit, shall be the praise for ever and ever. *Amen.*

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